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SUBJECT: Somalia - Parliament Extends Deadline for Electing President by Five Days

REF: a) DJIBOUTI 61

CLASSIFIED BY: Bob Patterson, Counselor for Somalia Affairs; REASON: 1.4(B), (D)

¶1. (C) In a setback to the UN Special Representative for Somalia's (SRSG) efforts to ensure that a new President is elected within the thirty days allotted by the Transitional Federal Charter, the transitional Parliament January 27 extended the deadline for election by an additional five days, to February 2. The vote occurred despite lobbying by the UN and members of the international community. The SRSG has told us that he will continue to insist that the Speaker hold an election by January 29. We will see the Speaker later on January 27 to tell him that USG support for his efforts to continue as Speaker will hinge on electing a President as soon as possible. The Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia (ARS), which will join the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) in forming a unity government, presented its list of two hundred MP-nominees to the Speaker on January 27. The list, predictably, has provoked grumbling from some clan quarters. End summary.

Parliament Votes to Extend

¶2. (C) On January 27, the transitional Parliament, meeting in Djibouti, voted overwhelmingly (193 - 6) to amend the Transitional Federal Charter in order to extend the thirty day period allotted for electing a president by an additional five days. The extension means that the Parliament now has until February 2, instead of January 28, to elect a new president. (Note: Former President Yusuf resigned on December 29.) The vote occurred in spite of strenuous lobbying by the UN Secretary General's Special Representative Ould-Abdallah and members of the international community, including the U.S. As noted reftel, individual MPs had constantly voiced their interest in seeing the deadline extended. The vote followed a brief, but raucous plenary that had MPs shouting down Speaker Sheikh Aden "Madobe's" efforts to force a vote for president by January 28.

¶3. (C) After the vote, the MPs ended the session, which had lasted about thirty minutes, and went to lunch. Among unfinished business, in addition to the election of a president, is a vote to extend the TFG's mandate, and a session to swear in the new ARS deputies. The ARS finally made its list of prospective deputies available on January 27. Predictably, the release of the list has sparked complaints from some that it is not sufficiently inclusive. (Note: We have reviewed the list and it does appear to respect the 4.5 formula for clan representation. In addition to core members of the ARS central committee, almost half are from the diaspora and there are several civil society representatives). Newly-elected Puntland President "Farooq" told us January 26 that Puntland-based Darod had not been sufficiently consulted by the ARS as they compiled the list. The Puntland President indicated that he might fly to Djibouti in order to make his views known, but also to lend support to the process.

¶4. (C) In the wake of the vote, SRSG Ould-Abdallah told us he would continue to insist that Parliament elect a president by January 29. We will meet with the Speaker later January 27 in order to make the same point, and to note that USG support for the Speaker is conditioned on delivering a presidential election in conformance with the Transitional Federal Charter.

Comment

¶5. (C) The January 27 vote was a disappointing development in the effort to keep Somalia's transitional Parliament in conformance with the Charter as it takes the next steps in the creation of a unity government and elects a replacement for President Yusuf. The MPs' lackluster work ethic, they have clocked fewer than three hours in session over three days, and excessive interest in their per diem payments, suggest that more disappointments will come, and occurs against the background of worsening security in Somalia (septel). We will continue to use all available tools in an effort to keep the Parliament on track, but the legislature's performance since arriving in Djibouti is, unfortunately, a demonstration of the TFG's performance since being created four years ago.
SWAN

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